

## **Updates Union Workers on Status on Facility Closures; Bridgeport to Remain Open**

October 10, 2009

Media, PA – To address the possible closures of several postal facilities in the area, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA – 07) held a press conference in front of the Bridgeport Post Office to review his discussion yesterday with United States Postal Service (USPS) Philadelphia District Manager James Gallagher, and briefing this morning with members of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), local elected officials, and community members. The Congressman confirmed that the Bridgeport facility would remain open, and expressed his appreciation for the work of the Philadelphia Regional Manager to also ensure that the Lansdowne-Yeadon branch was removed from a potential list of closures, and facilities in Wayne and Springfield would be expanded. However, he urged USPS to reconsider its approach to other at-risk locations, which are currently not able to have a full appeals process.

"With the Postal Service exploring closures throughout the area, it is important to ensure that USPS reviews take into account all possible means by which to preserve the current level of service," said Congressman Sestak. "Proposed closures will not only impact convenience for consumers in this region, but also affect the security of many postal union jobs in the midst of a difficult economic time. Of paramount importance, particularly with the loss of jobs in a recession, is that good governance is done and facilities are preserved at least until a full review and appeal process is exhausted. That is why I have written the Postmaster General to ensure that the appeal process – which presently does not appear to be included – will be available."

During a candid discussion, Mr. Gallagher shared that it had been decided not to close the Bridgeport Post Office following feedback from Congressman Sestak, other elected officials, business leaders and residents. However, Mr. Gallagher's office has made a recommendation to USPS leadership that post office retail locations in the Manoa Shopping Center, Havertown and the 69th Street Station, Upper Darby be considered for closure. Also, a review is in progress to determine the feasibility of consolidating the Southeastern Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) in Tredyffrin Township, Chester County with the new facility on

Lindbergh Boulevard, Philadelphia. Mr. Gallagher also updated the Congressman on plans to expand facilities in Springfield and Wayne, Delaware County.

When asked whether the proposed closures would receive the full notice, comment, and review process, it was ascertained that the Postmaster General would decide the issue of an appeals process if the decision was made to concur with a recommendation to close. In response, Congressman Sestak sent a letter to Postmaster General John Potter urging the USPS to follow statutory requirements when closing post offices -- including a public comment period and the right to appeal a closure. (Full text follows this release) This strong recommendation from Congressman Sestak comes as the USPS has decided to arbitrarily limit transparency requirements to only certain USPS facilities.

Under current law, USPS must offer a 60 day public comment period and the right to appeal any post office closure to the Postal Regulatory Commission. However, the Postal Service has decided to limit these requirements to post offices and not branches or stations. The Postal Regulatory Commission is an independent oversight body of the USPS and has repeatedly rejected this proposal, noting that the American public does not recognize such a distinction. Under the modified USPS rules, proposed branch and station closures will be subject to only a 20 day comment period with no right of appeal to the Commission. Congressman Sestak strongly disagrees with that position.

In May of this year, the USPS announced it was considering closing 3105 of its post office branches and stations in response to a \$4.2 billion dollar fiscal shortfall in 2009 alone, which follows similar fiscal deficits in 2007 and 2008. This summer, the proposed closure list was reduced to just over 400. The review process for those locations is still on-going and no final closure decisions have been made.

"The American people deserve the highest level of transparency and openness in this process," noted Congressman Sestak. "What the Postal Service is proposing is symptomatic of broader problems with transparency facing this nation's economy, health care system and energy policy. While this issue requires us to make difficult decisions, government -- including the USPS -- must always conduct itself with absolute openness."

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group

of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, the Congressman was the first Director of Deep Blue, the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the Global War on Terrorism. He served as President Clintons Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Congressman Sestak is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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The Honorable John Potter

Postmaster General & CEO

United States Postal Service

475 Lenfant Plaza SW

Room 10804

Washington, DC 20260-0004

Dear Postmaster General Potter,

I appreciate your efforts to preserve facilities and quality of service as the Postal Service makes difficult decisions in this economy. As the USPS undergoes reorganization, it is critical to ensure that the process is conducted with absolute openness and transparency. For this to occur when USPS decides to close a location, it must fulfill the statutory requirement to provide a public notice, a sixty day public comment period, and an opportunity to appeal the closure decision to the Postal Regulatory Commission. This rule should apply to proposals to close any post office locations, regardless of whether it is a post office, postal branch, or postal station.

This process affects the day-to-day lives of every resident of a community and many jobs and our employers-- the American people-- deserve more transparency and openness, not less. The decision to not offer a full appeals process is symptomatic of broader problems with transparency facing this nation's economy, health care system and energy policy. While this issue requires us to make hard choices, government must always conduct itself with absolute transparency and openness-- including the USPS.

As the Postal Service concludes its study on the proposed closure of 400 post offices that are currently under review, I call on the USPS to adhere to laws (39 U.S. Code Section 404) regarding this process. There should not be a distinction between different types of USPS locations, as these are based on outdated conceptions of the services provided by different post office locations that no longer apply. Instead, the USPS should follow 123.6 of the Postal Operations Manual (POM) and discontinue implementation of Section 123.8 of the POM-- eliminating the functionally irrelevant distinction between types of postal retail facilities.

Adhering to Section 123.6 of the POM, as you know, requires the USPS to provide public notice of a closure, receive public comments for 60 days, review the comments, and issue a decision. After a decision is made, anyone who is regularly served by the affected post office may appeal the proposed closure to the Postal Regulatory Commission. In contrast, 123.8 of the POM, does not require public notification or provide an appeals process for closures of branches or stations.

The USPS has an obligation to the public it serves. I have appreciated your candor to Congress and the American people about the challenges facing the Postal Service and I appreciate your leadership in trying to address legitimate and serious issues. However, it is inexcusable for the Postal Service to act against the interest of the public-- and its own long-term interests-- by defying what is required in statute and the findings of the Postal Regulator Commission.

I look forward to continuing to work with the USPS, its employees, and the public to address the broad array of issues facing the Postal Service.

Sincerely,

Joe Sestak  
Member of Congress